

The Attributes of God The Incomprehensible God

Why a series on The Attributes of God?

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

Remember how knowing the character of God was so helpful for Joni Erickson Tada following her accident that left her a quadriplegic.

Throughout my 20s, I became immersed in Bible study with these same friends—mostly character studies about God, especially his sovereignty. When it came to my accident, I had to know whether the buck stopped with him, and if it did, why didn't he prevent my accident? Around my big farmhouse table in Maryland, we'd tackle books like Loraine Boettner's *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* and others by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, J. Gresham Machen, and J. I. Packer.

There is comfort and stability that comes from knowing the nature and character of God.

Today we look at an attribute that is hard to wrap our minds around – The Incomprehensible God. How are we to understand the incomprehensible??

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Something more than a theoretical knowledge of God is needed by us. God is only truly known in the soul as we yield ourselves to Him, submit to His authority, and regulate all the details of our lives by His holy precepts and commandments. AW Pink

Tozer

"What is God like?" This book is an attempt to answer that question. Yet at the outset I must acknowledge that it cannot be answered except to say that God is not like anything; that is, He is not exactly like anything or anybody.

The effort of inspired men to express the ineffable has placed a great strain upon both thought and language in the Holy Scriptures. These being often a revelation of a world above nature, and the minds for which they were written being a part of nature, the writers are compelled to use a great many "like" words to make themselves understood.

Question 7: What is God? WCFLC

Answer: God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

So, in order to convey an idea of what he sees, the authors of scripture must employ such words as "likeness," "appearance," "as it were," and "the likeness of the appearance." In Ezerkiel, Even the throne becomes "the appearance of a throne" and He that sits upon it, though like a man, is so unlike one that He can be described only as "the likeness of the appearance of a man."

Tozer...

When the Scripture states that man was made in the image of God, we dare not add to that statement an idea from our own head and make it mean "in the exact image.".... To think of creature and Creator as alike in essential being is to rob God of most of His attributes and reduce Him to the status of a creature. It is, for

instance, to rob Him of His infinitude: there cannot be two unlimited substances in the universe. It is to take away His sovereignty: there cannot be two absolutely free beings in the universe, for sooner or later two completely free wills must collide.

If we insist upon trying to imagine Him, we end with an idol, made not with hands but with thoughts; and an idol of the mind is as offensive to God as an idol of the hand.

Left to ourselves we tend immediately to reduce God to manageable terms. We want to get Him where we can use Him, or at least know where He is when we need Him. We want a God we can in some measure control. We need the feeling of security that comes from knowing what God is like. ..

The yearning to know What cannot be known, to comprehend the Incomprehensible, to touch and taste the Unapproachable, arises from the image of God in the nature of man. ...the soul senses its origin and longs to return to its Source.

EX: "Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before."

God, the final frontier...

Theology, the study of God, is the spiritual attempt to do just that in terms of our relationship with God.

How can this be realized? The answer of the Bible is simply "through Jesus Christ our Lord." In Christ and by Christ, God effects complete self-disclosure, although He shows Himself not to reason but to faith and love. Faith is an organ of knowledge, and love an organ of experience. God came to us in the incarnation; in atonement He reconciled us to Himself, and by faith and love we enter and lay hold on Him.

That God can be known by the soul in tender personal experience while remaining infinitely aloof from the curious eyes of reason constitutes a paradox best described as Darkness to the intellect, but sunshine to the heart. ...Frederick W. Faber

"What is God like?" If by that question we mean "What is God like in Himself?" there is no answer. If we mean "What has God disclosed about Himself that the reverent reason can comprehend?" there is, I believe, an answer both full and satisfying. For while the name of God is secret and His essential nature incomprehensible, He in condescending love has by revelation declared certain things to be true of Himself. These we call His attributes. Tozer

Based on Romans 11:33ff here are four things we should keep in mind..

- It is a deep thing to know God and we are incapable of it by ourselves
- God is not indebted to anyone
- God does not need counsel from anyone
- Because everything is from and through Him, He alone deserves all the glory forever.

#1 -It is a deep thing to know God and we are incapable of it by ourselves

The difference between us as creatures and God the creator is such that we would not be able to understand God unless He revealed Himself to us.

One aspect of the Incomprehensible nature of God is what is called ASEITY (Latin "from self")

The Self existence of God. He has all life in Himself, not dependent on anything; we are entirely dependent on him ; all is derived from Him. He does not derive life from anything. He is Self-contained and self-sufficient. He has life in Himself. This of course relates to the NAME of God which He revealed to Moses...

"I AM THAT I AM" – Yahweh or Jehovah, or LORD

Aseity uniquely distinguishes God

"God has no origin," said Novatian (200-258AD) and it is precisely this concept of no-origin which distinguishes That- which-is-God from whatever is not God.

Origin is a word that can apply only to things created. When we think of anything that has origin we are not thinking of God. God is self-existent, while all created things necessarily originated somewhere at some time. Aside from God, nothing is self-caused. TOZER

When a child asks the question, "Where did God come from?" she is revealing something that is hardwired into thinking beings – "nothing comes from nothing." Captain Von Trapp and Maria sang about that.

"Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could" 🎵

SPROUL – There must be something that has in itself the power of being or else nothing would be for nothing could be.

Gen 1:1. Never a time when God did not exist – Ps 93:2

2 Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.

This blows our minds because we are finite – look at cemeteries- tributes to our mortality

John 1 Jesus stepped out of eternity into time.

God is the uncreated creator

Ps 90:-

1 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.2 Before the mountains were born

Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

3 You turn man back into dust And say, "Return, O children of men."

4 For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night.

#2 -God is not indebted to anyone. The Triune God stands apart from creation and is not indebted to anyone or anything.

AW Pink –points out another of the Incomprehensible aspects of the attributes of God- THE SOLITARINESS OF God

Gen 1:1 -

He Existed before all things...

There was nothing, no one, but God; and that, not for a day, a year, or an age, but "from everlasting." During eternity past, God was alone: self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied; in need of nothing. Had a universe, had angels, had human beings been necessary to Him in any way, they also had been called into existence from all eternity. The creating of them when He did, added nothing to God essentially. He changes not (Mal 3:6), therefore His essential glory can be neither augmented nor diminished.

God IS NOT CONSTRAINED BY ANY NEED OR LACK

God did not create us because of a need or loneliness.

Solitary confinement would not trouble God.

He is not obliged to anyone, and is in no one's debt. Rom 11:36

God was under no constraint, no obligation, no necessity to create. That He chose to do so was purely a sovereign act on His part, caused by nothing outside Himself, determined by nothing but His own mere good pleasure; for He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11). That He did create was simply for His own glory. Pink

That is so foreign to us because we are never that free from some sort of external constraint. We envy those who have such freedom. The cry goes out, “That’s not fair”.

Even if you won the Powerball lottery and were set for life, you’d still be constrained by the frailties of the human condition – death would be in your future.

God ALONE IS PERFECTLY FREE AND AUTONOMOUS.

God did not and does not need our praise. He can be honored or dishonored by men, but neither changes Him in His essential being.

EX: God is “like” the gal or guy who really doesn’t care what you think of her or him. He is not needy like people are. He does not live by opinion polls or headlines on CNN, NY TIMES, OR FOXNEWS.

God delights in the praises of His People, but his “self-esteem” isn’t based on it.

God has surveyed the landscape of the centuries and when He sees opposition rising against Him, he is not phased. In fact He laughs – Psalm 2; 37:13;;59:8; Prov 1:26-28; Zeph 3:17

#3-God does not need counsel from anyone Rom 11:34

We are not God’s counselors, so we need to abandon that role.

That’s hard to do isn’t it? We feel fairly comfortable telling God what he needs to do.

How do we presume to give God counsel? Every time we complain or worry.

Worry is sitting back and wondering if God is going to get it right

We even threaten God by promising to “unfriend” him.

“God, if you don’t work this out, then we’re through. I’m outta here.”

Do we really think that will be effective? Let’s not kid ourselves. God’s not stuck in an eternal middle school seeking to be the most popular kid in the class.

We abandon God at our peril, not His.

#4-Because everything is from and through Him, He alone deserves all the glory forever. Rom 11:36

The biblical heart is one that says, “God, it’s all about you, not me. Thy will be done. To you be all honor and glory.”

That goes against the grain of our cultural moment for in the eyes of the world people are Big and God is small (if he exists at all).

Our eternal purpose is to worship God.

"Worship," Tozer explained, "is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that majesty which philosophers call the First Cause but which we call Our Father Which Art in Heaven."

If we want to intensify our enjoyment in life and our sense of fulfillment and significance then the best way to do it is to hitch our hearts to the glory of God, not ourselves.

COME TO THE TABLE Where His glory is made known.

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